



The Scaleup Women Project - Exposé

What is a 'Scaleup'?

Scaleups are defined as companies that achieve a year-on-year growth of at least 20% in three consecutive years. However, this definition is not set in stone: in some descriptions, the company should have a certain number of employees at the start of this three-year phase, and 'growth' is also a bit vague: this could be revenue, number of active users etc, very much depending on the individual company's key performance indicators.

Scaleup Women

Studies clearly show that the involvement of women in leadership teams is beneficial to the sustainable growth of companies: according to a 2018 BCG study, female-founded startups generate more than twice the revenues per invested dollar in comparison to companies founded by purely male teams. If we take this statistic as an implication towards a more revenue-oriented and thus more sustainable growth mindset, it is clear that women become a crucial asset in a company's growth in the post-startup growth stages. Interestingly, a recent British study shows scaleups in the UK to be more diverse than startup companies: 40% of scaleups in the UK have mixed leadership teams, while only 20% of startups have women on their founding teams.

This raises some interesting questions:

- Are startups that have women in their founding teams more likely to become scaleups?
- Are companies more likely to become a scaleup if they hire women when they are leaving the startup stage?
- Can a startup increase its chances of becoming a scaleup by hiring more women for their leadership teams?
- What exactly is the influence that women in leadership roles have on companies in an intense growth phase?

The Scaleup Women Project

During Q2 2019, I am planning to have a series of 5-10 preliminary one-on-one conversations with women in the startup and scaleup world. Having spent the last ten years writing a founder's diary, I want to compare my thoughts and experiences with theirs to see how much overlap we may discover, or find differences worth exploring. Based on this, I am planning to start a podcast and publish a book with explorations drawn from the interviews. Beyond these individual conversations, I would like to set up an exclusive, invitation-only lunch for up to six scaleup women every quarter.

Why Scaleup Women?

I spent the last ten years running technology startups and pretty much ignoring the gender debate: I work well with men and I don't mind being the only woman in a room. I accepted the fact that certain things (fundraising for example) are more difficult for women, but I have never shied away from a challenge. I accepted it as part of the game, just like many other facets of startup life that have nothing to do with gender issues.

We keep hearing that we need more female founders, but I disagree. I believe it should simply not make any difference whatsoever whether you are a man or a woman founding a company: you will have to struggle through so much that your gender should not be another hindrance; it simply shouldn't matter. However I realise this is not something on which you can just throw a switch: it requires a lot of debate and good arguments. So what could be a better argument than looking at the success stories? Hearing from the women behind the scaleups - the ones who drive growth and generate disproportionate value for all their stakeholders.

About me:



Initially trained as a designer and having achieved my M.A in Design Management, I started my career by working as a Product Manager in the luxury goods industry. After working in the Writing Instruments section of Montblanc in Hamburg, I spent a couple of years travelling between Frankfurt and Hong Kong, overseeing the jewellery collection for the German JOOP! fashion and design brand.

In the years 2008-2018 I founded, scaled, sold or dismantled a total of six companies, building a unique profile along the way. In 2018, I started consulting clients on a range of topics around design thinking, digitisation and brand positioning and trained to become a scale up-business coach.

Personal passions include wine, food, books and painting.

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